

the order, thus showing that, whilst Australia affords the largest species of the Labiate and Composite orders, a little island not far from her coast presents us with one of the most remarkable of the *Gesneraceæ*. Professor H. Baillon has recently published a very elegant figure of *N. rhabdothamnoides*, which will enable the student to recognise the peculiar marks of difference between the new genus and those to which it is nearly allied. The Baron separates it from *Conandra*, because the corolla is not of a rotate shape, nor has the fifth stamen any anther, whilst the connectives of the anthers do not cohere in a tube exceeding the cells. From the New Zealand shrub, *Rhabdothamnus*, the plant from Lord Howe's Island is separated, not so much by habit, as by the divisions of the calyx, the straightness of the filaments, the speedy separation of the anthers, and the less regular fissure of the capsule (Frag. VII.). Whilst the singular occurrence of *Negria* in a remote part of the world affords a problem yet to be worked out in the distribution of species, the plant commends itself by its elegance and beauty to the consideration of Horticulturalists and Florists.

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REMARKS ON *Megapodius Brazieri*.

BY J. BRAZIER, C.M.Z.S., &c., &c.

I wish to correct an error made by Mr. E. P. Ramsay, F.L.S., in a Paper on the "Birds of the Solomon Islands," published in these Proceedings for 1879, p. 75. He there states that I had taken *Megapodius Brenehleyi* at the Island of Savo,\* in the Solomon group, and that Dr. Selater had named it from the egg alone, having never seen the bird. The fact is that H.M.S. Curaçoa, which I accompanied as Naturalist, during the expedition to the South Sea Islands, so interestingly described by the late Mr. Brenehley in his "Cruise of the Curaçoa," never called at Savo at all, and the *Megapodius* eggs were not collected there.

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\* Known also as Savu, Galera, and Russell Island.

I find in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London, 1869, p. 528, the undermentioned information: "The Secretary exhibited, on behalf of Mr. John Brazier, C.M.Z.S., a specimen of an egg of a species of *Megapodius* from Banks' Islands, and read the following notes by Mr. Brazier concerning it:—"The egg I send the Society I obtained, with four other specimens, at Vanua Lava, or the Great Island in Banks' Group, 13° 52' S. lat., 169° 4' E. long., situated near the New Hebrides group. The bird is well known to the inhabitants of Banks' Island; and my specimens were purchased of a native. The *Megapodius* that lays this egg builds its mound on the mountains near the sulphur springs. The natives told me that the mound is large; or as they expressed it, a 'big-fellow house.' The contents of the eggs were good eating. When I was on shore collecting shells, &c., at Sandwich Island, New Hebrides, a native offered me two eggs for sale, but he wanted more than I felt inclined to give him for them. I believe my friend Sir W. S. Wiseman took four or five of the very same egg, that had been brought alongside of the ship at Vanua Lava, or Great Island. When I had bought my specimens from the natives, I set out at once for the mountains to obtain, if possible, some of the birds; but it came on to rain, and night setting in, I had to return to the ship. Our stay there was only one day, for the greater part of which it rained. I was the first naturalist that had ever landed on the island to collect specimens of natural history. I should mention that I obtained the eggs on the 21st of August, 1865. I send you one specimen; one I keep myself; and the other I sent to Mr. Krefft, for our National Museum."

The statement that I kept one for myself was not quite correct. I retained three of the eggs, two of which I have since presented to the Hon. W. Macleay and Dr. Cox, respectively.

Mr. Sclater stated that he was not aware of any previous record of the existence of *Megapodius* in the group of the New Hebrides, except the short notes of Dr. Bennett (P.Z.S., 1862,

p. 247) where he alluded to the occurrence of this form in the islands of Tanna and Sandwich. Mr. Sclater had compared the present specimen with the series of eggs of the birds of this genus in the British Museum, and found it to come nearest to that of *Megapodius Pritchardi*, G. R. Gray (P.Z.S., 1864, p. 41, pl. vi.) which is figured in Hartlaub and Finsch's Ornithology of Polynesia, plate 2. But it was larger and more deeply coloured than that egg, and appeared to indicate the existence of an undescribed species of *Megapode* in Banks' Island, for which, following Mr. Gray's example, he suggested the name of *Megapodius Brazieri*.

Mr. Brenchley remarks at page 240 in the "Cruise of H.M.S. Curaçoa"—"The natives brought me three large eggs of a bird which lives in the vicinity of those hot waters, that Wall was of opinion belonged to the genus *Megapodius*. These eggs, of much greater length than width, and pretty nearly the same size at either end, were of a pinkish tint; they reminded me that when at the island of Vate,\* at the Christian village where Mr. Morrison lived, a native offered me two eggs exactly similar, which I declined, from fear of breaking them. I have heard that a large bird is to be found also in the neighbourhood of the volcano of Tanna."

The *Megapodius Brenchleyi*, described by Mr. G. R. Gray, Ann. and Mag. N. H., 1870, Vol. V., 4th series, p. 328, "Cruise of the Curaçoa," page 392, pl. 20, was found at Gulf Island, also called Galfe and Uji, Solomon Group.

Mr. G. R. Gray distinctly says, "A single specimen of the young bird, and two eggs (unfortunately in a broken state), were obtained at Gulf Island, where they were discovered in the month of September, 1865. These eggs are, both in size and colour, very similar to that of the *Megapodius Brazieri*, described by Mr. Sclater in Proc. Zool. Soc., 1869, p. 528. In 1864, I

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\*Vate is the native, the English name is Sandwich Island of Captain Cook.

observed, in the Proc. Zool. Soc., p. 42, that an egg (very similar in every respect to those above referred to), had been brought from San Christoval Island. As Gulf Island lies close to this last mentioned island, it is therefore very probable that the birds of these two islands may eventually prove to be of one and the same species. Mr. Selater has recorded that an egg of a *Megapode*, which he has described, under the name of *Megapodius Brazieri*, in the Proc. Zool. Soc., 1869, p. 528, has been found and brought from Banks' Islands. Mr. Brenchley's collection contains three specimens of eggs of a *Megapode* that were obtained at Vanua Lava, two of which are similar in colour and size to that described by Mr. Selater; but the third example is a dirty white. Mr. Brenchley has a note in reference to them, that they were found in the vicinity of the hot springs on the mountains during the month of August 1865. The neighbouring group of islands, the New Hebrides, is also the abode of a species of *Megapode*; and we are told by Captain M'Leod that they are found abundantly, especially on Tanna and Sandwich Island. Both these islands are also referred to by Mr. Brenchley, who remarks that on the first mentioned island a large bird is spoken of as living in the vicinity of the volcanoes; while in the second island eggs of a *Megapode* had been offered for sale. It may be remarked that the mature state of the bird of both these groups is at present unknown to Ornithologists."

From this it will be seen that Mr. Ramsay was in the first place incorrect, in stating that the egg to which Dr. Selater gave the name of *Megapodius Brazieri*, was found at Savo Island, Solomon Group, when it was in reality found at Vanua Lava, or Great Island of Banks' Group, some hundreds of miles distant. He has also expressed his opinion of the probability of the *Megapodius Brenchleyi* of Gray, being of the same species as *M. Brazieri*. This is a mere vague surmise; the two species may possibly be identical, but there is not a shadow of proof in support of that view, and the probability is very great that *M. Brenchleyi*,

from Gulf Island in the Solomon Group, is not the same as the *M. Brazieri* from the Bank's Group.

I subjoin the following quotation from the Zoological Society's Proceedings for 1874, p. 606, as it throws some light on the distribution of the genus in the South Seas:—

“A series of eggs of *Megapodes* (*Megapodius*) transmitted by Mr. John Brazier, C.M.Z.S., was exhibited, and the following notes on them read:—‘I send twenty-four eggs of a species, or of various species of *Megapode*, of which fourteen are from Savu or Galera, or Russell Island; one from Treasury Island; and nine from New Britain, all islands of the Solomon Group. I also send one bird in spirits, which was hatched on board ship, August 21st, and died September 8th, 1872; this bird was from a Savu egg. The natives bring these eggs off for sale to passing ships by the thousand; they use them raw. I have eaten the eggs when boiled, but do not much care for them, as they have a raw-potato-like taste and smell about them. When boiled, the thin membrane that covers the albumen is of a lead-colour; but when the yolk and albumen are beat together and made into an omelette, as I have seen our cook do, it is not to be known from the common fowl's egg. At New Britain the natives brought them off also in great quantities, like the Savu natives; in fact one saw the blue jackets eating them all day long, or as long as the eggs lasted. There must have been a great many thousands consumed in two days at both islands. At Treasury Island I obtained four, but I broke two in blowing; I send one. I also send a very young bird from a New Britain egg. When at San Christoval, I was shown an egg that Perry, a white man living there these last five years, said was laid by the ‘Wild Fowl’; and upon my visiting him a few days after, he had just obtained another from the nest of his domestic fowls. He being in bad health at the time, I did not press him to let me have it; and for two days I traversed the mountains with guides to try and obtain specimens of the bird, but without success.’”